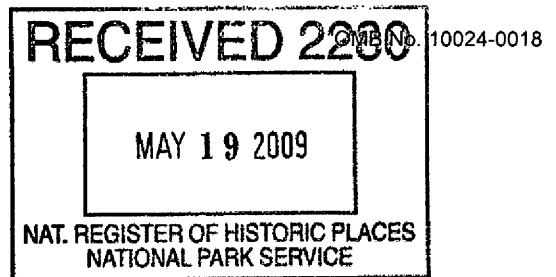


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Surratt, Mary E. Boarding House

other names \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 604 H Street, NW

☐ not for publication

city or town Washington, DC

☐ vicinity

state District of Columbia code DC county \_\_\_\_\_ code 001 zip code 20001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

DAVID MALONEY, DC SHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

5-13-2009  
Date

DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

8/11/2009

Surratt, Mary E. Boarding House

Name of Property

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## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

### number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1 (included in the Downtown Historic District)

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Trade

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Standing seam metal

other

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Surratt, Mary E. House  
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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our History.
- ☒ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

### Period of Significance

1864-1865

### Significant Dates

1865

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Mary E. Surratt; John Wilkes Booth

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

### Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# DC0913
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
#

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: DC Historic Preservation Office;  
Historic American Buildings Survey

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2,900 square feet

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8	3 2 4 7 8 2	4 3 0 7 5 9 2	3						
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing			
2				4						

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eli Pousson

Organization DC Historic Preservation Office

date May 2009

street & number 2000 14th Street NW, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

telephone 202-442-7600

city or town Washington

state District of Columbia

zip code 20009

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

X A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

X A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

X Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Mon G. Lee et al

street & number 1618 Q Street, N.W.

telephone

city or town Washington

state District of Columbia

zip code 20009

**Paperwork Reduction Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### *Description Summary*

Built in 1843, the Mary E. Surratt House at 604 H Street, NW in Washington, DC is a three-and-one-half-story, pre-Civil War brick dwelling designed in a vernacular Greek Revival style of architecture. Located in the heart of "old downtown," the semi-detached row house sits on the south side of the street and fronts directly onto the sidewalk. The white painted brick building is rectangular in plan, measuring 23'x 36' and occupies its original 29'x 100' lot. Historically set upon a raised foundation with an English basement, the building currently features a first-story storefront installed as part of a 1925 renovation and since altered. The building is covered by a gable roof clad with standing seam metal. The roof features two pedimented dormers on the front slope and a flat slab chimney, flush with the east end wall. Originally residential in use, the building had its principal entry located on the second-story level or *piano nobile* and accessed by an open stair and landing. The ground floor offered a secondary entry beneath the stairs, presumably serving the kitchen/service area.<sup>1</sup> Although the original Greek Revival-style front door surround, the original entry porch and stairs, and the original 6/6 windows and wood shutters are no longer extant, the building retains its original massing and configuration and constitutes an important survivor of the city's antebellum built environment.

### *General Description*

The primary front elevation facing H Street is divided into three bays. The first story features a storefront with two single entry doors to either side of a central plate glass show window.<sup>2</sup> The western entry serving the upper levels of the building occupies the original ground floor opening with a 20<sup>th</sup>-century glass replacement door. The east entry door, similarly a glass door in a metal frame, has been cut into the wall at the location of an original window. The projecting storefront, rectangular in plan, sits upon a concrete foundation and is covered with a flat roof supported by metal cables. The show windows are solid plate glass within metal frames.

The second and third stories consist of three symmetrically arranged and presently unshuttered windows. The second story has three, 1/1 replacement sash, wood sills and brick lintels. The west end window replaced what was historically the main entry, including a Greek Revival-style surround consisting of pilasters and a three-part entablature. A vertical seam line below and to either side of this window is visible where brick filled in the larger entry aperture when it was converted to a window.

The third story windows feature 1/1 double hung wood replacement sash and 20<sup>th</sup>-century iron balcony additions. Above a slightly projecting wood cornice with an ogee profile are two pedimented dormers with 6/6 replacement sash, located between the first and second, and second and third bays of the facade. The dormers have wide, plain frieze boards, supported by plain pilasters and undecorated, deep tympanums, typical of the vernacular Greek Revival style of architecture. Iron balconies have been added to the dormers.

<sup>1</sup> Historic photographs of the building prior to its 1925 alteration show the original entry doors and stair.

<sup>2</sup> DC Permit #6129 dated 1/21/1925. This permit calls for remodeling the building for store and apartments. The permit includes a special application for projections, including one *marquise* and one show window.

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The east side elevation, facing an alley, consists of a solid brick wall surface punctured by a pair of single windows in the attic level of the chimney stack, and by single 1/1 windows located on center of the wall at the second and third-story levels and by a single brick infill, located on the ground floor level in the front bay of the building. This brick infill appears to have enclosed a door opening.

The south rear elevation consists of a concrete block addition abutting the original exterior wall of the building and extending back to fill the rear lot. The third floor and gable roof the original building rise above this 20<sup>th</sup>-century rear addition, exposing two 6/6 windows on the third floor and a single 6/6 pedimented dormer on the rear slope of the gable roof. The third floor and attic dormer window are all served by a metal fire stair.

Historically, the interior of the building included a kitchen and dining room at the lower English basement level and a parlor and six large bedrooms on the upper floors and two small bedrooms in the attic. The first floor, originally the English basement, currently accommodates a restaurant. The restaurant is a single large open space that occupies the entire depth of the original building and a portion of the rear addition. None of the historic fabric remains on this floor. The upper levels, currently apartments, are not accessible to the public.

### *Integrity*

Although the Mary E. Surratt Boarding House was altered in 1925 to convert the property from its historic residential use to its contemporary commercial use, the property still retains its integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The boarding house is located at its original site along the 600 block of H Street, immediately adjacent to and extending down and framing a narrow historic alley, and is the end of a group of similarly scaled historic buildings along the street. The building is a contributing element to and part of a cohesive collection of mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the immediate vicinity that constitutes present-day Chinatown, located within the larger National Register-listed Downtown Historic District. In addition, the Boarding House, located just five blocks from Ford's Theater and the Peterson House, maintains its physical association with the nation's other important sites associated with the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Despite some alterations on both the exterior and interior of the building, the Surratt Boarding House retains its historic massing, its original brick walls, its original gable roof, and its three-bay fenestration pattern. This massing is made all the more visible by its location on an alley, leaving the side wall and its large slab chimney fully exposed to public view. As such, the building survives as a good representation of the city's rare surviving pre-Civil War urban dwelling form. On the exterior, the major alteration includes the circa 1925 construction of a street-level commercial storefront on the façade, along with the removal of the original raised entry door (converted into a window) and the wooden stair which provided access to the door. At the rear, a single-story addition has been added, leaving the original massing and window openings of the historic dwelling intact and legible at the upper levels. Although many of the original windows have been replaced, the dormer-level windows, the east end gable windows, and one window on the rear elevation are historic.

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On the interior at the first floor level, the original interior walls have been removed to accommodate an open dining area that spans the depth of the original building, plus part of the rear wing addition (the kitchen is behind the dining area in the other part). No historic fabric remains on this level. The second, third and attic levels are currently inaccessible, though they remain in use as apartments. According to HABS photographic documentation taken in 1988, these upper levels were largely intact at that time. In particular, the historic straight-flight stair with turned balusters and newel still survived between the third floor and attic level. Historic 6/6 windows still survive in the attic level dormers just as historic 6-light fixed windows survive in the east end wall.

Despite these alterations and additions, the property immediately evokes a sense of the past and encourages reflection on the experiences of Mary Surratt and John Wilkes Booth in Washington, DC. This evocative character, combined with the integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship, establish its integrity of association.

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### *Summary Statement of Significance*

The Mary Elizabeth Surratt Boarding House at 604 H Street NW, Washington, DC, is an 1843 vernacular Greek Revival-style dwelling that Mary Surratt operated as a boarding house from September 1864 through April 1865. During this period, John Wilkes Booth visited the boarding house both socially and to meet with other members of the conspiracy while planning President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. After Mary Surratt's execution for her participation in the assassination conspiracy, subsequent owners continued to maintain the property as a boarding house. In 1925, then-owner Irvan Schwartzman converted the first floor of the dwelling into a commercial space and added show windows at the street level.

The Mary Surratt Boarding House meets National Register Criterion A in the area of politics/government for its association with the conspiracy to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. The site meets Criterion B for its association with Mary Surratt, a co-conspirator in the assassination and the first woman executed by the US federal government. The property is also significant for its association with John Wilkes Booth, the leader of the conspiracy and the President's assassin.

On several occasions between September 1864 through April 1865, Mary Surratt and John Surratt Jr., her son and a Confederate courier, hosted John Wilkes Booth, Lewis Powell, and George Atzerodt—all recognized as conspirators in the plan to assassinate President Lincoln—at the property. Military detectives searched the boarding house for John Surratt only hours after the assassination. On their return two days later, the detectives arrested Mary Surratt as well as Lewis Powell, who happened to arrive at the boarding house at the same time as the detectives.

On June 30, a military tribunal found Mary Surratt guilty of conspiracy, although five of the nine judges recommended against her execution because of her gender and her perceived old age of 42 years. President Andrew Johnson refused this requested "stay of execution," convinced that Mary Surratt had "kept the nest that hatched the egg." On July 7, 1865, Mary Surratt was executed at the Washington Penitentiary, becoming the first woman ever executed by the United States federal government. Immediately following her execution and continuing through the present, a popular controversy regarding Mary Surratt's guilt and association with the assassination has attracted a range of scholarly investigations and conspiracy theories.

Although not the only site where the conspirators met to plan the assassination, the Mary E. Surratt Boarding House is the only one of such sites extant in the District of Columbia. Ford's Theater and the Petersen House, within the Ford's Theater National Historic Site in Washington, DC, and the Surratt House in Clinton, Maryland are all recognized for their association with the assassination conspiracy and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance. The Mary Surratt House, listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1968, similarly merits listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance. Even as a Chinese restaurant occupies the first floor, the Mary E. Surratt Boarding House is an important property and a tangible reminder of the conspiracy to assassinate President Lincoln. It is fitting that in this 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Abraham



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Lincoln's birth the Mary E. Surratt Boarding House be recognized for its association with his death and officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Period of Significance for the Surratt House is 1864-1865, the period during which Mary Surratt lived at and hosted conspirators at the property up until her arrest and execution.

### *Resource History and Historic Context*

#### Building History

Jonathan T. Walker constructed the Greek Revival-style brick dwelling at 604 H Street NW, Washington, DC in 1843 as a single-family dwelling.<sup>3</sup> Ten years later on December 6, 1853, John Surratt purchased the property from then-owner Captain Augustus A. Gibson using proceeds from the sale of Surratt's family farm that previous May. John Surratt rented the property in DC and, that same year, constructed a tavern and inn at a major crossroads in Prince George's County, Maryland where he came to reside with his family.<sup>4</sup> John and Mary Surratt and their children, Isaac, Anne, and John Jr., soon took on a central role in the rural community. The Maryland State Legislature selected the tavern as the local district's polling place and the US Post Office Department appointed John Surratt as the local postmaster for a post office at the tavern. As the tavern grew to include a farm, gristmill, and general store, the crossroads became known as Surrattsville.<sup>5</sup> Despite the tavern's success, John Surratt's alcoholism and gambling debts forced Mary Surratt to take over greater responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the tavern during the 1850s.<sup>6</sup> When the U.S. Civil War began in 1861, Lincoln prohibited mail service between the Union and the Confederate States, prompting the development of an illicit courier system throughout Southern Maryland. Many local residents, including the Surratt family, sympathized with the Confederacy and the Surratt Tavern acquired a reputation as a safe station on the underground route for spies and smugglers travelling from Virginia to Washington, DC.

John Surratt died suddenly in late August 1862, leaving behind huge debts that forced Mary Surratt to struggle with burdensome payments and demanding creditors. John Surratt Jr. left St. Charles College in Baltimore and on September 1, 1862 he was appointed by the federal government to succeed his father as postmaster. John Jr. took an oath of loyalty to the Union, as required by the position, but soon began working with the Confederate Signal Corps and Secret Service as a mail courier. Local Union troops eventually arrested John Surratt on November 17, 1864, for these activities. Although the government only imprisoned Surratt for a few days, the U.S. Post Office Department dismissed him from his position as postmaster and assigned the position to a local Union loyalist. Undeterred, John Jr. dedicated himself full-time to the Confederate Secret Service, often acting as a courier between the Confederate leaders in Richmond, Virginia to associates in Montréal, Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, the house was designated 541 H Street.

<sup>4</sup> Trindal, Elizabeth Steger. 1996. *Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy*. Pelican Publishing Company, April. pp. 35-39

<sup>5</sup> The contemporary address of the Surrattsville tavern is 9118 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD.

<sup>6</sup> Larson, Kate Clifford. 2008. *The Assassin's Accomplice: Mary Surratt and the Plot to Kill Abraham Lincoln*. Basic Books, June 2. pp. 21-22

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After John Surratt lost his position as postmaster, Mary Surratt could not support the family with the income from the tavern alone. Consequently, Mary Surratt decided to rent her property at Surrattsville and move to the H Street property in Washington, DC. Within a few months, John Lloyd, a former policeman from DC, who evidently had prior experience operating a tavern, began renting the Surrattsville property for \$500 a month.

Mary's daughter, Anna Surratt, moved to 604 H Street NW, Washington, DC in September to open the boarding house, while Mary Surratt remained at the tavern until December 1 to help John Lloyd with the transition. The boarding house had six large bedrooms on the first three floors and two small bedrooms in the attic. Their first boarder, Honora Fitzpatrick, arrived in early October, followed in early November by Louis Weichmann (a friend of John Surratt, Jr. from St. Charles College and a clerk at the War Department). Weichmann took a room on the third floor, occasionally sharing the space with John Surratt, Jr. when he stayed in Washington, DC and other temporary boarders. Nora shared a room with Anna together with Mary Surratt on the second floor or in the attic. The Holohan family and a few additional acquaintances completed the set of long-term boarders.<sup>7</sup> Ads placed in the *Washington Evening Star* on November 11, November 30, December 8, and December 27 helped to fill the six rooms by the end of December.<sup>8</sup> John Surratt, Jr. traveled frequently as a courier and Weichmann often shared his room with temporary boarders, including other Confederate couriers acquainted with Mary Surratt and John Surratt Jr.

During the months before Abraham Lincoln's reelection in 1864, John Wilkes Booth began planning to kidnap Lincoln and ransom the President in exchange for the release of all Confederate prisoners. Booth hoped to make contact with residents in Southern Maryland, like the Surratt family, who could support him as he attempted to smuggle Lincoln south to Richmond, Virginia. On December 23, 1864, John Wilkes Booth asked Dr. Samuel Mudd, an acquaintance of the Surratt family from Byranstown, Charles County, Maryland, to accompany Booth on a visit to the H Street boarding house, presumably to engage John Surratt, Jr. in his plan to kidnap the President. On their way to the boarding house, the pair encountered John Surratt, Jr. and Louis Weichmann walking on Seventh Street. The group spent the evening socializing, first in Booth's room at the National Hotel and then at the lobby of the Pennsylvania House on C Street.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after this initial meeting, Booth became a regular visitor at the H Street property, entertaining members of the household and often meeting privately with John Surratt, Jr. and Mary Surratt, both together and separately.<sup>10</sup> As the conspiracy continued to develop over the winter, co-conspirators George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell, and David Herold all stayed at the boarding house on at least one occasion, while Atzerodt joined Booth as a regular visitor. Although aspects of the planning took place at the boarding

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 38-42

<sup>8</sup> Kauffman, Michael W. 2004. *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*. Random House, November 2. p. 436

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 155-158

<sup>10</sup> Larson 2008

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house, the property did not serve as the only meeting place for the conspirators. There is no evidence, for instance, that conspirators Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen ever entered the home. Booth often preferred to meet at local stables or privately with associates at their hotels and never convened a full meeting of the conspirators at the H Street boarding house.<sup>11</sup>

According to the court evidence and testimony, five to six weeks before the assassination, John Surratt, Jr., David Herold, and George Atzerodt delivered two carbines, ammunition, twenty feet of rope, and a monkey wrench to John Lloyd at the tavern in Surrattsville and instructed Lloyd to hide the firearms in an unfinished attic space. On April 10, Mary Surratt asked Louis Weichmann to accompany her on a trip to Prince George's County to collect a debt from a former neighbor, John Nothey. According to Weichmann, when they were passing through nearby Uniontown, Mary Surratt and Weichmann encountered John Lloyd. Surratt asked Lloyd about the "shooting irons" and suggested that they "would be needed soon."<sup>12</sup> On April 14, 1865, the day of the assassination, Mary Surratt, again accompanied by Weichmann, delivered a set of field glasses given to Mary that morning by Booth to John Lloyd at the Surrattsville Tavern. Mary repeated her reminder to ready the "shooting irons" because they were going to be "called for that night." Surratt and Weichmann arrived back at the boarding house at 8:30 PM. At 9:00 PM, John Wilkes Booth arrived at her parlor and the two spoke privately for a few minutes before Booth left for Ford's Theater.<sup>13</sup>

At approximately 10:00 PM, Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre. Booth escaped from the city within an hour and, by midnight, arrived at the Surrattsville Tavern where Booth and David Herold retrieved the cached weapons before continuing south in their attempt to escape. Mortally wounded, President Lincoln remained in a coma at the Petersen House across from Ford's Theater for nine hours before being declared dead at 7:22 AM, April 15, 1865.

Only a few hours after the assassination, military investigators surrounded the boarding house searching for John Surratt, Jr. and questioned Mary Surratt on his location. Although there are no credible accounts revealing the original tip that led investigators to the boarding house, John Surratt Jr. may have had a reputation as a known associate of John Wilkes Booth. John Surratt Jr. had left Richmond a few days before and at the time of the assassination he was in Elmira, New York.<sup>14</sup> After receiving the news, John Surratt Jr. fled the United States for Canada arriving in Montréal a few days later.<sup>15</sup> The investigators returned to H Street again on April 17, 1865, to continue their interview with Mary Surratt. Soon after the investigators arrived, Lewis Powell came to the door of the boarding house carrying a pick-axe and seeking refuge three days after his failed assassination attempt on Secretary of State William Seward. The investigators suspected Powell immediately, disbelieved Surratt when she denied any recognition, and decided to arrest the entire household. Investigators searched the boarding house itself for several hours, recovering a pair of spurs, a bullet mold, a composite photograph of Confederate leaders and a *carte de*

<sup>11</sup> Kauffman 2004 p. 197

<sup>12</sup> Larson 2008 pp. 77-79

<sup>13</sup> Larson 2008 pp. 82-88, Kauffmann 2004 pp. 222-224

<sup>14</sup> Kauffman 2004 pp. 56-58

<sup>15</sup> Chaconas, Joan L. 2003. John H. Surratt Jr. In *The Trial*, ed. Edward Steers, 421. University Press of Kentucky. p.62

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visite photograph decorated with Confederate flags and the inscriptions, "Thus will it ever be with Tyrants," "Virginia the Mighty," and "*Sic Semper Tyrannis!*"<sup>16</sup>

On May 10, the federal government convened a military tribunal to try Mary Surratt and seven other co-conspirators. During the course of the trial, Surratt's inconsistent statements, testimony from John Lloyd and Louis Weichmann, and corroborating testimony from other boarders convinced the tribunal that Mary Surratt played a central role in supporting the assassination conspiracy. Weichmann and Lloyd described Mary Surratt's visits to the tavern in the days prior to the assassination and several boarders described the frequent visits by Booth and Atzerodt to meet with Mary Surratt and John Surratt, Jr. Surratt's inexperienced lawyers attempted to undermine the credibility of the two primary witnesses but failed to offer a convincing defense. After seven weeks of hearings, the tribunal found all eight defendants guilty of the charges against them. The tribunal sentenced Mary Surratt, Lewis Powell, David Herold, and George Atzerodt to death. The tribunal sentenced Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen, and Dr. Samuel A. Mudd to life imprisonment and Edward Spangler, a stagehand at Ford's Theater charged with abetting Booth's escape, to six years.<sup>17</sup>

On July 7, 1865, Mary Surratt was hanged to death at the Washington Penitentiary becoming the first woman to be executed by the United States federal government. At the time of Mary Surratt's trial, a broad popular consensus accepted the evidence of her involvement in the conspiracy and supported her execution. Even before the testimony began, a May 11 account in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* described Surratt as a "female fiend incarnate" and the "'mater familias' of these criminals."<sup>18</sup> Despite this consensus, however, five of the twelve judges recommended against the death penalty for Mary Surratt, in consideration of her gender and her perceived old age of 42.<sup>19</sup> President Andrew Johnson refused, arguing that Surratt "kept the nest that hatched the egg."<sup>20</sup>

Immediately following the execution however, public shock and revulsion against the hanging of Mary Surratt led to an outpouring of public sympathy. Critics launched aggressive attacks on both the legality of the military tribunal and the credibility of Louis Weichmann and John Lloyd as witnesses. Published in 1895, *The Judicial Murder of Mary Surratt* by DeWitt promoted this narrative by portraying Mary Surratt as the innocent victim of an illegal process.<sup>21</sup> The distortions found in this work were promoted by a range of parties, laying fertile ground for conspiracy theorists, notably including the anti-Catholic 1897 *Rome's Responsibility for the Assassination of*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 263-267

<sup>17</sup> Kauffman 2004 p. 369, Larson 2008 pp. 195-200

<sup>18</sup> Leonard, Elizabeth. 2006. Mary Walker Mary Surratt and Some Thoughts on Gender. In *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, ed. Nina Silber and Catherine Clinton, 213. Oxford University Press. p. 113

<sup>19</sup> Kauffman 2004 pp.370 reflects on the mixed public sentiment at the time writing, "Few people doubted then that Mary Surratt was guilty as charged... But no woman had ever been executed by the federal government, and few thought they would actually go through with it in this case."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p.383

<sup>21</sup> Larson 2008 pp.229-230 argued that DeWitt, "conflated, misstated and refashioned evidence to support his contention that Mary was innocent and railroaded to the gallows" and "helped frame arguments in favor of Mary's wrongful conviction for the next hundred years."

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*Abraham Lincoln*, and the discredited 1937 investigation, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered* accusing Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton of complicity in the assassination.<sup>22</sup>

More recent scholarship has challenged the claims of innocence asserted by earlier scholars and conspiracy theorists. The publication of Louis Weichman's autobiography in 1974 and the discovery of a letter among John Wilkes Booth's papers documenting Weichmann's suspicions in the months prior to the assassination have offered support for his credibility as a witness.<sup>23</sup> Recent books on the assassination and Surratt, including *Blood on the Moon*, *American Brutus*, and *The Assassin's Accomplice* have documented Mary Surratt's close contact with Booth and Atzerodt and affirmed her substantial role in the conspiracy.<sup>24</sup>

Sheltered by a Catholic priest in St. Liboire, Canada during the course of the trial, John Surratt Jr. remained a fugitive for over a year, first travelling to Liverpool, England and then to Italy where he escaped from prison after a short detention by the Vatican. American officials finally arrested Surratt on November 23, 1866 in Alexandria, Egypt and placed him on the USS Swarta for transport to the United States. The USS Swarta arrived at Washington Naval Yard in 1867 and the federal government tried Surratt in a Washington, DC civilian court. The case ended in a mistrial and the court rejected a second indictment in 1868 because the conspiracy charge had passed the statute of limitations. The court forced the government to release John Surratt.<sup>25</sup>

The house at 604 H Street was auctioned on June 26, 1866, to pay remaining debts inherited by the Surratt family. The family home and tavern in Surrattsville was auctioned in March 1869 to Robert W. Hunter, esq. for \$3,500. Throughout the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century, a succession of owners continued to maintain the H Street property as a boarding house. In 1895, the Hope and Help Mission organized by the Christian Endeavor Society held receptions at the property to solicit donations for "fallen and destitute women and girls."<sup>26</sup> Other tenants included laborers, doctors, and real estate agents. In 1905, tenant Charles E. Barton, also known as Earl Count Courtney, a worker in the bookbinding division of the Government Printing Office, and a self-declared prophet who claimed to have predicted the assassination of President William McKinley, declared his own candidacy for the White House and planned to continue a campaign for the 1908 election from his basement apartment.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies*, William Hanchett provides a popular overview of the range of theories on the Lincoln assassination. Kauffmann 2004 pp.392, writes that Eisenschiml's book, "set forth one of the great conspiracy theories of the twentieth century, but it was built on a combination of spotty research, false assumptions, and leading questions."

<sup>23</sup> Kauffmann 2004 pp. 395-396 discusses the ambiguity of Weichmann's relationship to the Surratt family. Leonard. 2008. *The Assassin's Accomplice: Mary Surratt and the Plot to Kill Abraham Lincoln (review)*. The Journal of Military History 73, no. 1: 283-284 reflected the sentiment of many writers describing Weichmann as "an unsavory and thoroughly self-interested young man."

<sup>24</sup> Larson 2008 pp.235-236 contrasted early assassination scholarship defending Surratt's innocence with more recent work taking "a new view of Mary's role." A notable exception, Elizabeth Trindal's 1996 biography of Surratt, is described by Larson and other reviews as reflecting a Southern apologist perspective on the Civil War.

<sup>25</sup> Kauffmann 2004 pp. 397-390

<sup>26</sup> Anon. 1895. Hope and Help Mission In Need. *The Washington Post*, July 1.

<sup>27</sup> Anon. 1905. COUNT FOR PRESIDENT. *The Washington Post*, March 15.

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The high turnover of tenants and owners may have contributed to the perception that the boarding house “never proved profitable.” By the early 1920s, the second-story entrance had been boarded up after the entrance stair had collapsed. At a public auction for the property in 1922, it “took some time for the auctioneer to work the price up to any considerable figure,” and the owner eventually rejected the highest bid of \$9,700, in favor of private offer of \$10,000 made earlier by another party.<sup>28</sup>

In 1925, Irvan Schwartzman of Alexandria, VA purchased the property and undertook a major renovation. Schwartzman contracted with architect C.A. Williams and the R.N.C. Construction Company to convert the first floor into a commercial space with a large display window and open apartments on the upper floors.<sup>29</sup> In the late 1920s, the Piccadilly Bottle Supply Company occupied the first floor, evidently operating an illicit business. In 1928, a “flying squadron” raided the property, found corks, bottles, and labels that “bore the names of famed liquor brands,” and arrested six men for violations of the prohibition law.<sup>30</sup>

The local area changed significantly in the early 1930s, when Chinese immigrant families and businesses moved to H Street following their displacement by the new construction by the federal government at the Federal Triangle. In 1931, Yow Chin Teas moved into the building and subsequent tenants have included High Wah & Co. Importers, Sie Que Co. Imports, and the Suey Sang Lung Co. grocery. The building remains in use as a Chinese restaurant named Wok and Roll.

In 1968, the Surratt House was designated a DC Landmark and in 1982 was included within the Downtown Historic District.

<sup>28</sup> Anon. 1922. LINCOLN DEATH-PLOT HOUSE GOES ON BLOCK. *The Washington Post*, March 24.

<sup>29</sup> Anon. 1925. POLITICAL COMMENT. *The Washington Post*, January 28.

<sup>30</sup> Anon. 1928. Historic Surratt House Scene of Raid by Police. *The Washington Post*, January 7.

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Surratt, Mary E.  
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Surratt, Mary E. House

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## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Mary E. Surratt House at 604 H Street, NW occupies Lot 48 of Square 454 in Washington, DC. +

## Boundary Justification:

Lot 48 of Square 454 has been associated with the property since its construction in 1840-43.  
+

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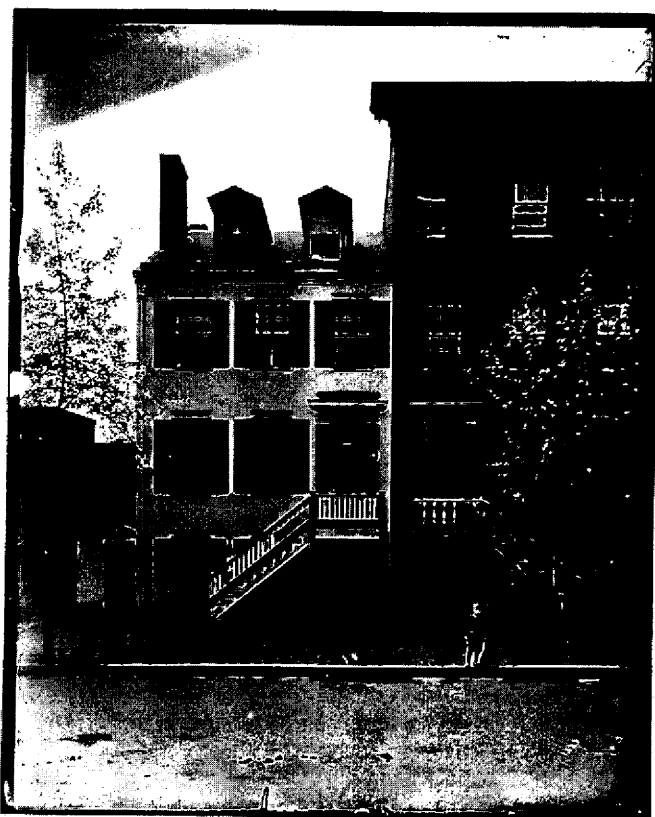
### HISTORIC PHOTOS

Surratt, Mary E. House

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604 H Street NW, Washington, DC, Photo taken between 1890 and 1910. Brady-Handy Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpbh.03432>

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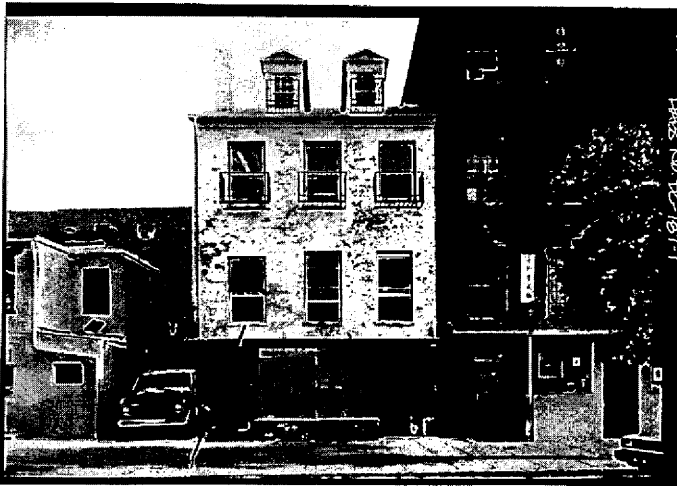
### HISTORIC PHOTOS

Surratt, Mary E. House

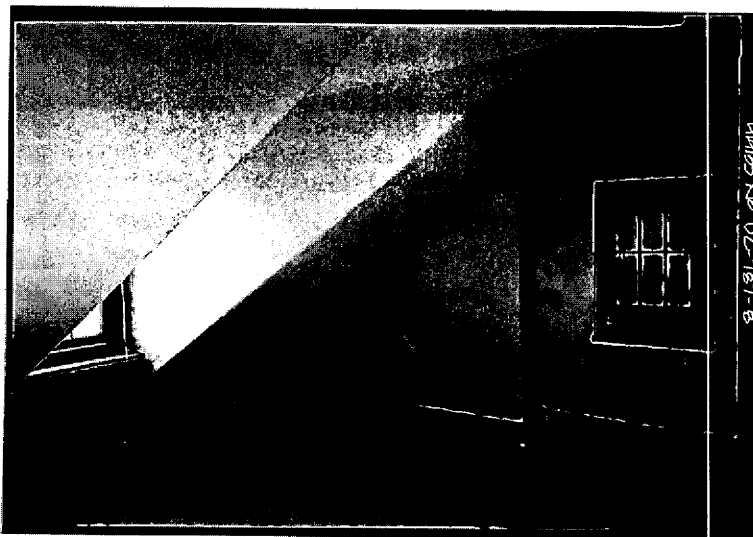
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604 H Street NW, Washington, DC, North Front Façade, 1988. Boucher, Jack. Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



604 H Street NW, Washington, DC, Fourth Floor, Front Room 1988. Boucher, Jack. Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

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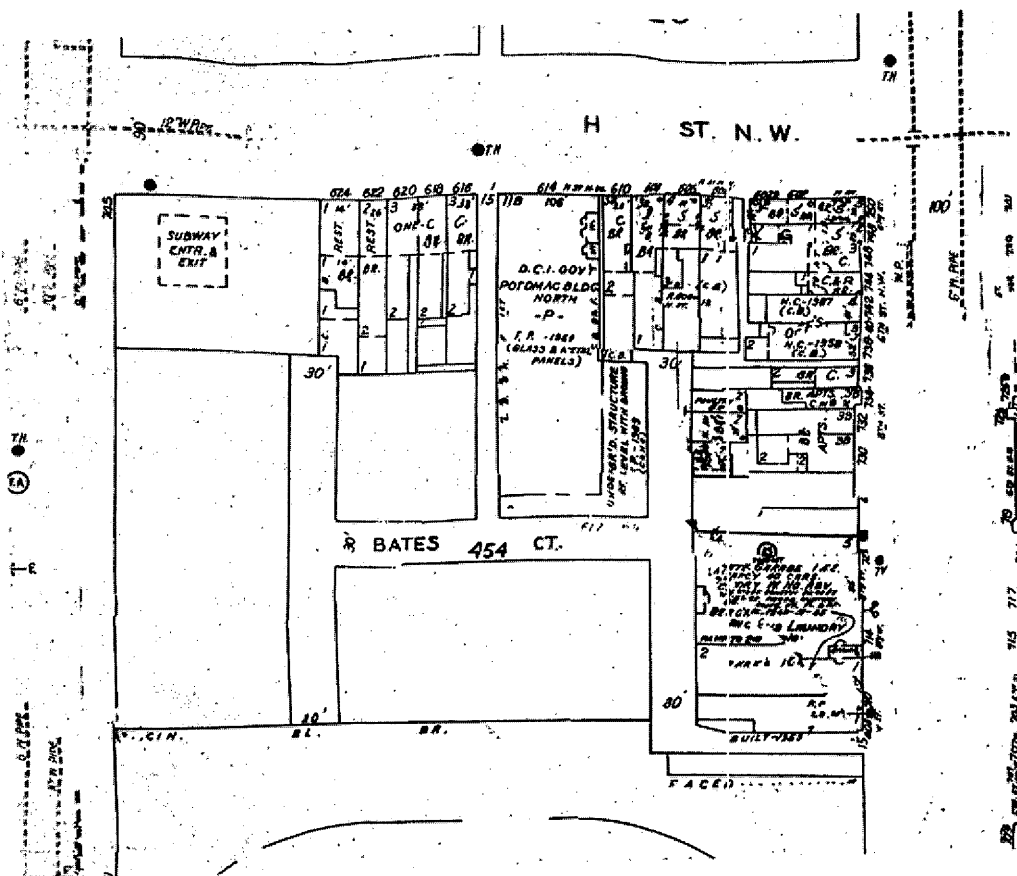
604 H Street NW, Washington, DC, Stairway from Second to Third Floors. 1938. Boucher, Jack. Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hhh.dc0913>

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## SITE MAP



Base Map from *Sanborn Building and Property Atlas, Washington, D.C.*, 1997

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- 1) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
General view looking southwest  
1/8
- 2) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
North elevation, view looking south  
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- 3) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
North and east elevations, view looking southwest  
3/8
- 4) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
North elevation, view looking southeast  
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### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 5) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
South elevation, view looking north  
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- 6) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
South elevation showing rear addition.  
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- 7) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
Interior, First Floor, View looking from front to rear of building  
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- 8) Surratt, Mary E. House  
604 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Eli Pousson  
April 2009  
DCHPO  
Interior, First Floor, View looking from rear to front of building  
8/8





CHINATOWN LIQUOR  
LIQUOR BEER & WINE

Buck to Roll  
Chinese & Japanese Fine Cuisine  
604

會商工良安



珍味樓  
604

Wok n Roll Restaurant

Szechuan Bar  
Tapioca Milk Tea

OPEN

珍味樓

會商







會商

Wok n Roll  
Chinese N Japanese Fine Cuisine

珍味樓  
604

corner

OPEN

珍味樓

商工





珍味樓 604 Yoke n Roll Chinese & Japanese Fine Cuisine Yoke n Roll Restaurant

STREET  
NO PARKING  
ANY TIME  
ANY DAY  
NO STOPPING  
OR PARKING  
ANY TIME  
ANY DAY

OPEN  
珍味樓

會商工良安









RESERVED  
PARKING

Parking For  
Chin, Inc. Only

Parking  
Chin, Inc.







